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ABSTRACT

Based on S. Chaffee and J. McLeod's coorientation model of communication, this paper addresses the question of individual and cognitive versus social and communicational comparisons in order to further elaborate the theory behind the coorientation model. The paper argues that, in a situation which includes two individuals and a topic, both individuals may have objectives for agreement as well as for accuracy and congruency. Using an abbreviated notation system to illustrate the relationships between person A, person B, and topic T, the paper develops a theoretical model of coorientation that takes into account the objectives of each person as well as the perceptions of an outside observer. A theoretical basis is proposed for predicting some of these objectives for each individual on the basis of their relative power in the situation, combined with their relative authority with regard to the topic. The paper argues that the traditional coorientation variable of accuracy, congruency, and agreement can only be understood in the context of a theory addressing the coorientation objectives of the two persons. The paper contends that a complete description of a coorientation system must address the questions, "whose accuracy," "whose congruency," and "who agrees with whom?" Figures illustrating the model are appended. (SRT)

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WHOSE ACCURACY, WHOSE CONGRUENCY, AND WHOSE AGREEMENT?
VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF COORIENTATION

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WHOSE ACCURACY, WHOSE CONGRUENCY, AND WHOSE AGREEMENT?
VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF COORIENTATION

Abstract

The distinction between individual and cognitive *vs* social and communicational comparisons is taken as the basis for a further theoretical elaboration of Chaffee and McLeod's (1970) coorientation model. It is argued that both individuals in an A-B-X system may have objectives for agreement as well as for their own and the other person's accuracy and congruency, and that the resulting compounding of "demand" as a source of measurement error can only be resolved through a theory which predicts individual coorientation objectives from independently observable characteristics of the system. A theoretical basis is proposed for predicting some of these objectives for each individual on the basis of their relative power in the situation, combined with their relative degree of authoritativeness with regard to the topic.

WHOSE ACCURACY, WHOSE CONGRUENCY, AND WHOSE AGREEMENT?
VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF COORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

Communication begins when one person creates a signal (a patterned alteration in the physical environment) intending that another person will infer a message (Worth and Gross, 1974; Ritchie, 1986a). For a complete description of the process, we need answers to at least two questions: "What does the first person (the message originator) *intend* that the second person infer?" and "What does the second person *actually* infer?"

Chaffee and McLeod (1970; McLeod and Chaffee, 1972, 1973) proposed that the best measure of "perfect communication" is *accuracy*, or the degree to which each person's impressions of the other person's cognitions match the other person's actual cognitions. But what if person A is a double agent and person B a sleuth trying to smoke him out? The "perfect" outcome for the one would seem quite "imperfect" to the other. While each seeks to gain an accurate view of the other's cognitions, *neither* wants the other to have an accurate view of his own cognitions.

As the foregoing illustrates, the two individuals in an A-B-X coorientation system often have conflicting objectives. It is

not enough to talk about "congruency," "accuracy," and "agreement." We must also ask "Whose congruency?" "Whose accuracy?" and "Who agrees with whom?"

Chaffee and McLeod proposed their coorientation model explicitly as a measurement model, and it has led to a rich and productive research tradition. However, the theoretical promise of this approach has yet to mature. In their retrospective assessment, McLeod and Chaffee (1979: 24) complained about the failure of many coorientation studies to grapple with the theoretical issues: "What results, at best, is yet another replication of our research rather than development of alternative measures and elaborated theory."

From a *theoretical* perspective, perhaps the key insight in Chaffee and McLeod's model is its distinction between individual-level (cognitive) comparisons, which can be observed by (and only by) a given individual, and social-level (communicative) comparisons, which cannot be directly observed by either party. In the present paper I will take up the question of individual and cognitive *vs.* social and communicational comparisons as a basis for further theoretical elaboration of the model. I will suggest that, in addition to cognitions about the topic, T, and cognitions about the other person's orientations toward the topic, each individual may have cognitions about the coorientation comparisons (agreement, his own and the other person's accuracy, and his own and the other person's congruency). Furthermore, each individual may have *objectives* for any of these elements--objectives which will guide certain aspects of his communication behavior.

I will start with the comparisons which Chaffee and McLeod proposed as measurements of communication *outcomes*, and treat them as instrumental or *intermediate* objectives, which are influenced by such factors as the social characteristics of the A-B relationship and the communication context, and which in turn influence the individual's choice of communication tactics.

THE BASIC COORIENTATION MODEL

Note: The following analysis makes use of a modified and extended system of notation. The reader is referred to Appendix A for a complete explanation of terms and symbols.

Chaffee and McLeod (1970) restated Newcomb's (1953) A-B-X coorientation model as a *measurement* model. In doing so, they focussed attention on the distinction between what person *A* is able to observe, A:X and A:B, and what person *B* is able to observe, B:X and B:A. Person A does not react to Person B's cognitions about a topic, T (which may be an object X, person B, or person A), but to her *perceptions of* Person B's cognitions (Figure 1). This distinction enables the theorist to separate the outcomes of the communication process into actual *agreement* (as it might be detected by an outside observer, e.g. the social scientist), perceived agreement or *congruency*, and *accuracy* (how closely A's perception of B's cognitions match B's actual cognitions and vice versa--also detectable only by an outside observer).

- Figure 1 about here -

Chaffee and McLeod define a "perfect" communication process as one which leads to *accuracy* of each person's perceptions about the other person's cognitions. *Agreement* (actual or perceived)

may or may not occur, and may or may not even be desirable. The task of the researcher is to examine the structural barriers or *constraints* inhibiting "perfect" communication, and coorientation is presented as a model for measuring and "diagnosing" these barriers.

INCLUDING AN OBSERVER IN THE MODEL

It has been customary to describe an A-B-T coorientation system as if the observer could stand outside the system and know the true value of expressions such as A:T and B:[A:T]. Although such a simplification is ordinarily justified, our conceptual understanding of the model will be improved by explicitly acknowledging the subjectivity of all the measures (Figure 2). Thus, *agreement* implies that A's statements about T match B's statements; *accuracy* implies that A's statements about what B probably thinks about T match B's statements about T (and the converse), and *congruency* implies that each person's statements about what the other probably thinks matches his own statements about T.

-- Figure 2 about here --

In Figure 2, no connection has been drawn between the cognitive terms, A:T, B:T, A:[B:T], B:[A:T], and the corresponding signals, (A:T), (B:T), (A:[B:T]), and (B:[A:T]). The classic coorientation model implicitly assumes that A:T is the basis for (A:T), and so forth. However, these connections are problematic. In the first place, person B (for example) may or may not try to provide a veridical representation of his cognitions about T. In the second place, if he *does* try, he may not be entirely successful. The issue of how the communicative

signals might be connected to their originators' cognitive systems will be treated in a subsequent section.

The observer of an A-B-T system can err in at least two ways. The observer's judgment of agreement will go astray if either O:[A:T] ≠ A:T or O:[B:T] ≠ B:T; similarly for the observer's judment of congruency or accuracy. An observer may err if either A or B deliberately attempts to mislead him, for example, if (A:T) ≠ A:T. Or the observer may misinterpret one or more of the signals. Since A is in the position of an observer with regard to B's cognitions and B is in the position of an observer with regard to A's cognitions, both A and B are susceptible to similar errors: furthermore, O:[A:[B:T]] is susceptible to A's error as well as the observer's error.

COORIENTATION FROM AN INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Each participant in the A-B-T system has access to the same information as is available to an observer. Additionally, each participant has access to his *own* cognitions, both his cognitions about T and his cognitions about the other person's cognitions. In Figure 3, the objective form of the model is "unfolded," to show the coorientation system as it might appear to person A, an objective observer standing outside the system, and person B. (All connections in Figure 3 are *comparisons*.)

-- Figure 3 about here --

If both parties provide veridical communication about their cognitions, Figure 3 adds little to the information in Figures 1 and 2. For example, if (A:T) is based exclusively on A:T, and (A:[B:T]) on A:[B:T], then an outside observer would be as well

qualified as A to judge her accuracy and congruency. Indeed, we might expect under such circumstances that A would judge her *own* accuracy and congruency in precisely the same way that an outsider would--by comparing her statements to each other and to B's statements. ("I say that I think B likes classical music and B says he likes classical music so I must have a pretty accurate perception of how B feels about classical music.")

However, we have no reason to assume that individuals always provide veridical communication about their cognitions. Even when there is no overt intent to deceive, individuals may be somewhat less than completely transparent in their communications -- and there often *is* an overt attempt to deceive.

Thus, each person is potentially concerned with five distinct coorientational comparisons. For person A, these are: A:*accuracy*A, A:*accuracy*B, A:*congruency*A, A:*congruency*B, and A:*agreement*, of which only A:*congruency*B is accessible to an observer outside the system.

Restating the model in cognitive terms enables us to distinguish the interaction as it is perceived by the observer and by each of the participants. By distinguishing between an individual's cognitions and his communications about his cognitions, we are in a position to consider the individual's *objectives* in coorientation terms, and to investigate the relationship between coorientation objectives and communication tactics. We are also able to recognize that the two individuals in an A-B-X system may have quite divergent objectives, and to model the interaction between their objectives.

In particular, we can see that *agreement*, *accuracy*, and *congruency*, by themselves, will not provide a complete description of a coorientation system. Given that the individual can manipulate his communication behavior in such a way as to hinder the other person's accuracy, communication behavior that contributes to *congruency*A does not necessarily contribute to *congruency*B--and similarly with accuracy. Furthermore, *Agreement* may come about in three very different ways: A:T >= B:T (A:T changes to agree with B:T), A:T =< B:T (B:T changes to agree with A:T), and A:T >=< B:T (A and B reach agreement, with no assumption as to whose cognition changes). In order to understand the dynamics of the system, we must ask "Whose congruency?" "Whose accuracy?" and "Who agrees with whom?" More basically, we must also consider the different -- and possibly conflicting -- objectives which each person has, for his own and for the other person's accuracy and congruency as well as for agreement.

COORIENTATION OBJECTIVES

Once an individual, A for example, has made the comparisons shown in Figure 3, between his own cognitions about T and the cognitions represented by B's signals, he may be led, by whatever considerations, to form objectives for the future state of these comparisons. He may also form objectives concerning B's cognitions -- or, at least, concerning B's future communication signals. Some of these objectives may be realized wholly within the A-B-T coorientation system; some may require going *outside* the system, that is, either expanding the scope of topic T or shifting the topic altogether. (Some of the factors which

contribute to an individual's coorientation objectives will be discussed in a later section.)

-- Figure 4 about here --

First, consider the agreement objectives which, for A, may take any of three forms: A:{A:T >= B:T}, A:{A:T =< B:T}, and A:{A:T >=< B:T}. In the first instance, A would like to know -- and share -- B's cognitions about T. Perhaps B is an expert and A a novice, or perhaps B is a rock star and A a fan. In order to adopt B's cognitions A needs to know what they are: A:{A:T >= B:T} implies A:{*accuracy*A}. If the topic is extremely complex, so that A needs to have his mistakes identified and corrected by B, A:{*accuracy*B} is also implied.

An agreement objective of the form A:{A:T =< B:T} implies that A's objective is for B's cognitions about T to match her own: A:{B:T} >= A:T. Except in the case in which B has a complementary objective, B:{B:T >= A:T}, as described in the preceding paragraph, A has no direct means of changing B:T. A can compare A:[B:T] with A:{B:T}, to determine how close she thinks B's opinion is to the target. After B has spoken, she can also compare (B:T) with A:{B:T}. If B's cognitions do not seem to "match up," A must go outside the coorientation system to achieve her objective. To achieve A:{B:T >= A:T} when (B:T) ≠ A:{B:T} or A:[B:T] ≠ A:{B:T}, A may broaden the topic of communication to include other, related topics (reasoning about T), or A may shift the topic to B:T or to B (impugning B's qualifications or threatening reprisals against B).

If A's agreement objective takes the form A:{A:T >=< B:T}, much the same reasoning holds. The primary difference comes in

the nature of the action once A goes outside the A-B-T coorientation system. In particular, *ad hominem* attacks and threats of reprisals are less likely, and reasoning about the relationship between T and other objects or concepts more likely. Consequently, A:{A:T >=< B:T} would appear to constitute less of a threat to B than A:{A:T =< B:T}. A:{A:T >= B:T}, of course, is the least threatening of all.

Congruency might be considered the *appearance* of agreement. A:{*congruency*A} may be achieved either by A:[B:T] >= A:T or by A:T >= A:[B:T]. The second path, A:{A:T >= A:[B:T]}, is quite similar to A:{A:T >= B:T}; the main difference is that accuracy is not necessarily involved. The simpler path is the first path, A:{A:[B:T] >= A:T}, since it requires no more than to minimize *accuracy*A. For example, I might find it comfortable to believe that my brother's attitude toward the death penalty is similar to my own--but it really doesn't matter, so I'm unlikely to put much energy into finding out what his attitude *really* is. As long as I lack *accuracy* about his true thoughts, I can continue in the comfortable belief that we agree.

A:{*congruency*B} implies A:{B:[A:T]} = A:{B:T}. Changing B:T requires that A go outside the A-B-T system, and leads to the same difficulty as *agreement*, A:{A:T =< B:T}. A conceptually simpler solution for A is to set A:{B:T} = (B:T), so that A:{B:[A:T]} = (B:T) and to operate on B:[A:T] by means of the signal (A:T), which *is* under A's control. Thus, if (i) A does not observe agreement, (B:T) ≠ A:T, (ii) A does not believe he has the power to change B:T, and (iii) A wishes B to believe that

A:T = B:T, then A:{B:[A:T]} = A:{B:T} = (B:T) ≠ A:T , which implies that A:{B:[A:T]} ≠ A:T. The situation can be most conveniently resolved by blocking B's accuracy. A:{*congruency*B}, then, tends toward A:{*inaccuracy*B}.

Incompatibility of Coorientation Objectives

Thus we see that the tradeoff between congruency and accuracy applies both to the individual's objectives for his own accuracy and congruency and to his objectives for the other person's accuracy and congruency. *Accuracy*A, however, is entirely compatible with *congruency*B (and the converse). In fact, if A is to achieve his objective of maintaining *congruency*B, *accuracy*A is more or less requisite.

A second implication of this line of reasoning is that, in the absence of a reasonable assurance that A:T = B:T, *accuracy*A and *accuracy*B can only exist in the same system if neither person has *congruency* as an objective, and *congruency*A can only coexist with *congruency*B if neither person has *accuracy* as an objective. (Either person's *accuracy* will work against her own *congruency*, and if either person has the other person's *congruency* as an objective, she will tend to work against that person's *accuracy*.)

Coorientation Objectives and Communication Signals

The signal (A:[B:T]) will generally arise under one of two conditions. In the first place, the objective A:{*accuracy*A} may lead A to request "feedback" of the form: "If I understand you correctly, you seem to be saying..." In this instance, (A:[B:T]) should match A:[B:T] reasonably closely.

In the second instance, either B:T or A:[B:T] may actually become a topic of communication. For example, if Fred comes back

with an anchovy pizza, Liza may complain, "Fred, you *know* that I don't like anchovies!" Whereupon, Fred may have some cause to misrepresent his cognitions about Liza's orientations toward anchovies: "Well, I was under the impression that you didn't mind them..." These situations may be treated by modelling the entire interchange with Liza's attitude toward anchovies--or Fred's imputed prior knowledge of her attitude--as the topic, T.

The signal (A:T) may arise either in support of an A:{*accuracy*B} objective or in support of an A:{*congruency*B} objective. If A's objective is *accuracy*B, then A:{B:[A:T]} = A:T. If A's objective is *congruency*B, then A:{B:[A:T]} = A:{B:T} = (B:T) ≠ A:T; what A wishes to have B believe she thinks has no relationship at all to what she thinks. She may agree or she may disagree: it doesn't matter, since she wants him to believe she agrees in any event. In either case, (A:T) is based directly on A:{B:[A:T]}: (A:T) is related to A:T only indirectly and conditionally.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OBSERVER

The traditional interpretation of the coorientation measures -- particularly agreement -- is based on the assumption that what A says he thinks about T corresponds with what he actually thinks, that is, (A:T) = A:T, at least within the limitations of language. However, the foregoing analysis suggests that each of the observed masures is influenced by the coorientation objectives of A and B (Figure 5).

-- Figure 5 about here --

From the susceptibility of observations to social demand (the subject's tendency to give a response which reflects the social dynamics of the data-gathering situation) we may infer that (A:T) = A:{O:[A:T]}, (B:T) = B:{O:[B:T]}, and similarly for (A:[B:T]) and (B:[A:T]). Furthermore, since A:[B:T] depends on B:{A:[B:T]} and B:[A:T] depends on A:{B:[A:T]}, then O:[A:[B:T]] depends on B:{A:[B:T]} and O:[B:[A:T]] depends on A:{B:[A:T]}. Thus, O:*accuracy*A compares B:{O:[B:T]} to B:{A:[B:T]} and O:*accuracy*B compares A:{O:[A:T]} to A:{B:[A:T]}. The familiar problems of "demand" as a source of error are compounded because O:[A:[B:T]] multiplies the error in B's prior communications to A by the error in A's present communications to O.

Another implication concerns control over the communication situation. Both A and B have some control over congruency, through presentation of their own opinions and through (refraining from) attempts at accuracy. B, however, has little control over *accuracy*B, and A has little control over *accuracy*A, beyond the cultivation of "listening skills." If B provides feedback to A, in the form of (B:[A:T]), and if A's objective is *inaccuracy*B, then B's feedback merely helps A to calibrate her deceptive signals.

COORIENTATION OBJECTIVES: TOWARD A THEORETICAL MODEL

In order to get around the problem of implicit subjectivity, we need a theoretical model, which states at least some of the conditions under which an individual might adopt one or another of the relevant coorientation objectives. Although Chaffee and McLeod's (1970) argument for *accuracy* as a measure of "perfect"

communication is theoretically compelling, it has been argued in the preceding that accuracy may not be a primary concern of the individuals involved in a coorientation situation, and the measurement of accuracy depends critically on a theoretical understanding of the individuals' objectives in the situation. An even more basic issue is raised by the question "*Whose* accuracy?"

If the exchange of information about the environment could consistently be regarded as the dominant motivation for communication, then inaccuracy might be considered counter-productive, wasteful of energy, and ultimately self-defeating, and accuracy would probably by a primary objective of most individuals most of the time. However, shaping and sustaining social relationships is probably *at least* as important as exchanging information. Not surprisingly, there seems to be a baseline preference for *congruency* and positive A-B relationships (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). It also is reasonable to assume, at least in so highly individualistic a culture as the United States, that individuals have a baseline preference for autonomy, that is, for feeling that they are in control of their own *cognitions*, even if they cannot be in control of their *actions*. These two assumptions suggest the first, "baseline," proposition concerning coorientation objectives:

Proposition 1: All other things being equal, an individual will prefer that other people agree with her.

The baseline preference for congruency, A:(A:[B:T] = A:T) implies A:(A:[B:T]) = A:(A:T). A baseline preference for autonomy, A:(A:T) = A:T, further implies that A:(A:[B:T]) = A:T.

It is not enough for most of us to believe that our cognitions are in harmony with those of the other person: we ordinarily prefer to believe that *he* agrees with *me*, rather than the reverse. Even leaving aside issues of self-esteem, this makes sense in a world in which one might encounter many other persons, each with quite different orientations B_i:T.

The belief that another person agrees with oneself is a fragile thing. Since B has more control over *accuracy*A than A, all B has to do, to shatter *congruency*A, is to communicate (B:T) ≠ A:T. Accordingly, given a preference for A:{A:[B:T]} = A:T, we might expect that A would prevent such an occurence if she could.

Proposition 2: If person A has more power with respect to person B than person B has with respect to A, A is likely to indulge both preferences (autonomy and congruency), and insist that (B:T) = A:T, or at least that B refrain from communicating (B:T) ≠ A:T.

For the present purposes, "power" is restrictively defined to include no more than an individual's ability to affect another individual's outcomes: that is, to reward or punish. In most situations, each party will have some power over the other. The issue is *relative* power: if A has more power over B than B has over A, A is in a position to match B, blow for blow, and still have punishments or rewards left over to use for the purpose of gaining compliance -- or the appearance of compliance.

It is here, however, that an additional variable enters our calculations. If, as Blau (1964) suggests, power can be "spent" like capital, A is unlikely to expend her power to secure

congruency in a topic in which she is only slightly interested.

Proposition 2A: The exercize of power by A to secure a condition of *congruency*A will be directly proportional both to the differential in power between A and B, and to A's degree of interest in the topic, T.

If B believes A might use her power to punish disagreement, then B will be motivated to have A believe that his cognitions match hers.

Proposition 3: If A has significantly more power than B, and B believes that A might use that power to punish disagreement (or reward agreement), B will tend to have an objective of *congruency*A. In notational form, B:{A:[B:T] = A:T}.

Within the coorientation system, B cannot influence A:T, but he *does* have considerable control over A:[B:T], through his communications about T, (B:T). Accordingly, there will be a tendency, when A has significantly greater power, for B to appease A through communications such that (B:T) = B:[A:T].

Now, if B is to stay out of trouble, he needs to know what the target is. Accordingly, B:{B:[A:T] = A:T}.

Proposition 3A: Under the conditions stated in Proposition 3, B will tend to have an objective of *accuracy*B.

It was previously shown that *congruency*B can only be achieved, in a situation of actual disagreement, by changing either B:T or B:[A:T]. However, the requirement of *accuracy*B (in order to stay out of trouble with A) means that B cannot change B:[A:T] in order to maintain or restore congruency. Hence, he must either sacrifice his congruency, by leaving B:T ≠ B:[A:T] or sacrifice his autonomy, by changing B:T. If B does not change

B:T >= A:T, then B:(A:[B:T] = A:T) implies B:(A:[B:T] ≠ B:T). For the general case, in which we lack prior knowledge of the state of agreement and B:T ≠ A:T, then B:(A:[B:T] ≠ B:T).

Proposition 3B: If B regards A as having insufficient grounds for demanding agreement ("authoritativeness"), B will adopt an objective of *inaccuracy*A. On the other hand, if B regards A as having high authoritativeness, B will tend to adopt an objective of agreeing with A, B:(B:T >= A:T).

Authoritativeness is defined as any grounds for legitimizing A's claim to the right to influence B:T. The most obvious grounds would be recognized "expertise": B believes that A knows more about T either as a result of A's personal experience or accomplishments (someone who has just returned from an extended visit to South Africa might be accorded "authoritativeness" on the topic of Apartheid) or as a result of social certification or accreditation. Another possible basis for authoritativeness is being "at risk" -- if A is B's employer and T concerns the objectives of the company, B might reason "It's her money; if she says T is the best policy, who am I to argue?"

Power *without* authoritativeness might occur, for example, when a professor of physics demands that his student agree with him about U.S. policy toward Mexico or when an employer insists that her employee agree with her about civil rights legislation. When A lacks an authoritative basis for her demands of agreement, it becomes relatively easier for B to justify both sacrificing his "baseline" objective of *congruency*B and engaging in deceptive communication.

When A has a sufficient authoritative basis B will desire to be correct, and adopting B:{B:T >= A:T} will seem less a sacrifice of autonomy than a way of increasing B's *own* authoritativeness. Note that authoritativeness with respect to a topic T can be a source of power with respect to the same topic, since authoritativeness increases the reward-value of agreement and the punishment-value of disagreement. By adopting an objective B:{B:T >= A:T} toward an authoritative person A, B can advance the overall objective of increasing his own authoritativeness with respect to T and hence (1) decreasing A's power advantage compared to himself and (2) increasing his own power advantage compared to other persons.

In such a case, where B's objective is for B:{B:T >= A:T}, B may seek "feedback" from A as a means of enhancing his own accuracy and increasing the probability of gaining his goal of authoritativeness.

Proposition 4: A strong objective of B:*accuracy*B will lead to an objective of B:*accuracy*A.

Other situations which might lead to an objective of *accuracy* for the other person are not difficult to imagine. Perhaps the most common is an implicit barter: "I will level with you if you will level with me," or, more cynically, a fear of being found out. Under some circumstances, B:{*accuracy*A}, in the form of "self-revealing" may also constitute a subtle form of wielding power over A: B forces A to "accept me as I am," thereby acknowledging B's importance.

Another interesting implication of B's effective control over *accuracy*A is that it gives B at least *some* degree of power

over A. Furthermore, the more A desires B's agreement, the more power B gains from his ability to conceal his thoughts.

Other influences on coorientation objectives

The theoretical propositions set forth in the preceding pages do not by any means exhaust the influences on individual coorientation objectives. A thorough treatment would require a comprehensive model of communication objectives -- a task which would probably be premature and certainly beyond the scope of this paper. For the present, it should suffice to mention two additional influences on coorientation objectives: the individual's overall objectives for the encounter, and the social norms governing the context in which the encounter takes place.

Coorientation objectives should probably be seen as *instrumental* to the achievement of overall objectives. For example, if a young man is discussing his ex-girlfriend with a different young lady, his coorientation objectives (and hers) will depend critically on whether he is asking for advice or for a date. Similarly, if a student is discussing a concept with his teacher, his coorientation objectives will depend on whether she is explaining the concept to him or examining him on his grasp of the concept.

The social norms governing the context in which an interaction takes place will also have a strong influence on coorientation objectives. In the context of a social event, such as a party or wedding, congruency is usually emphasized, and accuracy de-emphasized. People *do* engage in accuracy-determined conversation at parties and even at weddings--but they win few

points with the host or hostess when they do so. In a context such as a legal proceeding or classroom, where the search for truth is at least nominally at stake, accuracy is the order of the day. An individual who gives too much priority to congruency and too little to accuracy in the courtroom is a perjurer; in the classroom, he is a sycophant.

CONCLUSIONS

Chaffee and McLeod's (1970) version of the coorientation model has been further modified, by radically separating the cognitive elements from the social: the result is a more complex model, composed of the interaction of three individual (cognitive) views of the A-B-T system: that of each participant, A and B, and that of the observer. It has been argued that the traditional coorientation variables, *accuracy*, *congruency*, and *agreement*, can only be understood in the context of a theory of the coorientation objectives of the two persons, and that in any event, a complete description of a coorientation system must address the questions, "Whose accuracy?" "Whose congruency?" and "Who agrees with whom?"

The primary purpose of the analysis reported herein was to elucidate some issues in the coorientation model, and to suggest conceptual approaches which might prove fruitful for development of a coorientation-based theory. Toward this end, a few hypotheses have been proposed, concerning the possible effect of power and perceived authoritativeness on individual coorientation objectives. A more complete treatment -- which is beyond the scope of the present paper -- would generate hypotheses

concerning the effects of individual communication objectives, including the degree of interest in the topic, T, and the social context of interaction on coorientation objectives. It should also prove fruitful to investigate the influence of coorientation objectives on the communication behaviors, such as self-revealing vs. self-concealing behavior (Berger, *in press*; Berger and Kellerman, 1986).

The foregoing discussion has focussed primarily on the implications for the interpretation of the coorientation model, and for generation of hypotheses concerning communicative tactics in a coorientation situation. However, the arguments set forth herein have potential implications for a variety of theoretical issues. Although space does not permit a detailed treatment, it may be worthwhile to draw attention to two of these.

The most obvious is the interpretation of Chaffee and McLeod's family communication pattern (FCP) instrument, which has been based primarily on the coorientation model. Given that the parent and child are always in a situation of differential power, that the child may recognize the parent as authoritative on some topics, but not on others, and that both the parent-child power relationships and the child's view of parental authoritativeness change radically over time as the child matures, the traditional explanations of the "socio-orientation" and "concept-orientation" scales may need reconsideration (see Ritchie, 1986b).

Another area in which the revised coorientation model may prove evocative is public opinion research. First, the possibility of modelling public opinion as a coorientation system, suggested by Ritchie (1986a), can be brought much closer

to realization by completely separating the individual cognitive elements of the system from the social, communicative elements. Second, the relationship between differentials of power and authoritativeness suggested herein may provide the basis for a dynamic model of the diffusion and alteration of public opinion, which could be potentially superior to a mere averaging of responses to questionnaire items.

Before any of these (and other) possibilities can bear fruit, considerably more work needs to be done on the coorientation model, including its eventual integration into a broader theory linking communication objectives to communication behaviors. It is hoped that the foregoing analysis will contribute to this work.

APPENDIX A
NOTATION

A somewhat elaborated system of notation will help minimize confusion. Previous writers have used "A-X" to denote "A's orientations toward X," but this usage is awkward when applied to cognitions about cognitions. Accordingly, a colon will be used to denote "cognitions about" or "orientations toward." Cognitions about another person's cognitions will be denoted by brackets; for example, A:[B:X] may be read as "A's impression of what B thinks about X." Coorientational objectives will be denoted by {}; A:{B:[A:T] = A:T} or A:{*accuracy*B} implies that one of A's objectives is to contribute to B's *accuracy*. A communicative signal intended to be interpreted as a represention of a person's cognitions will be denoted by parentheses. For example, (A:T) may be interpreted as a communicative signal originated by A to express her cognition about T; (A:[B:T]) may be interpreted as a signal originated by A to express her impression of B's cognition about T. There is no presumption as to whether (A:T) = A:T or (A:[B:T]) = A:[B:T].

Relationships between cognitions will be denoted by = if the cognitions are essentially the same, by ≠ if they are different, by ≠ if there is no relationship at all (knowing one cognition provides no information whatsoever about the other) and by ~ if the relationship is unknown. Similarity between cognitions resulting from a change process will be denoted by >= if the change is presumed to take place on the left side of the expression, by =< if the change is presumed to take place on the right side, by >=< if the two sides are presumed to be equally

likely to change. For example, A:X >= A:[B:X] implies that person A will change his cognitions about X, e.g., in order to maintain congruency with person B.

It has been customary to use "X" for the object or concept toward which person A and person B are mutually oriented. However, the individuals in an A-B-X coorientation system may also interact with regard to a person, including either A or B. Person A may be interested in comparing B's cognitions about her with her own self-concept, or in comparing her cognitions about him with *his* self-concept. Since these personal cognitions may interact with more objective cognitions in interesting ways, the model will be generalized as an A-B-T system, where "T" stands for any topic, including A, B, or the A-B relationship.

Whether T stands for A, B, or X, both A:T and B:T may be interpreted as either affective (attitudes) or cognitive (beliefs and cognitive structuring; Newcomb, 1953; McLeod and Chaffee, 1973). An *affective* orientation implies "I like" or "I dislike" while a *cognitive* orientation implies "It is...." "S/he is..." or "I am..." Affective orientations are limited to one of two mutually exclusive states (or three, if "neutral" is allowed), cognitive orientations may assume an unlimited number of states, some but not all of which are mutually exclusive.

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Figure 1

The Basic Coorientation Model

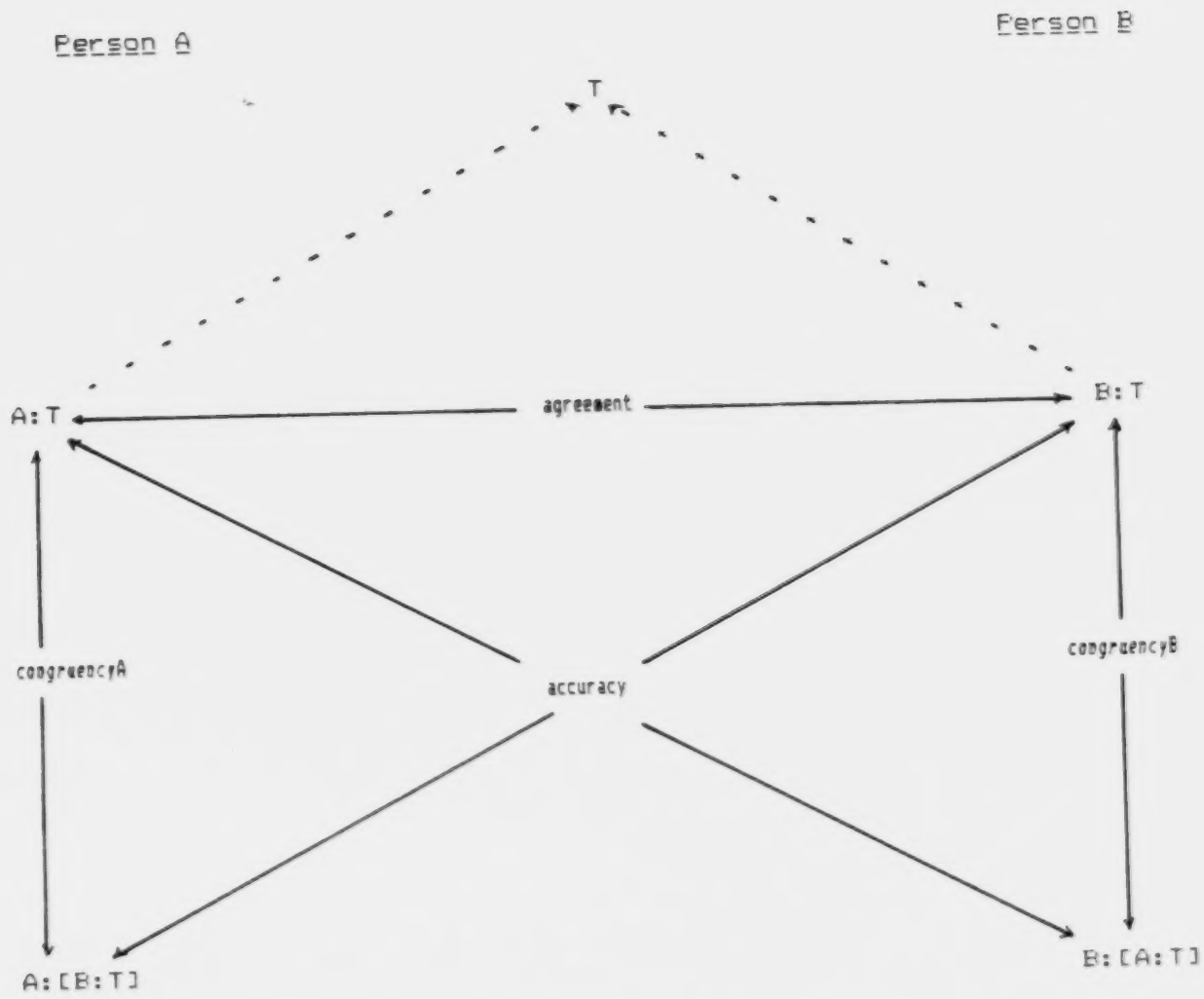

Figure 2

The Coorientation Model: Objective Form

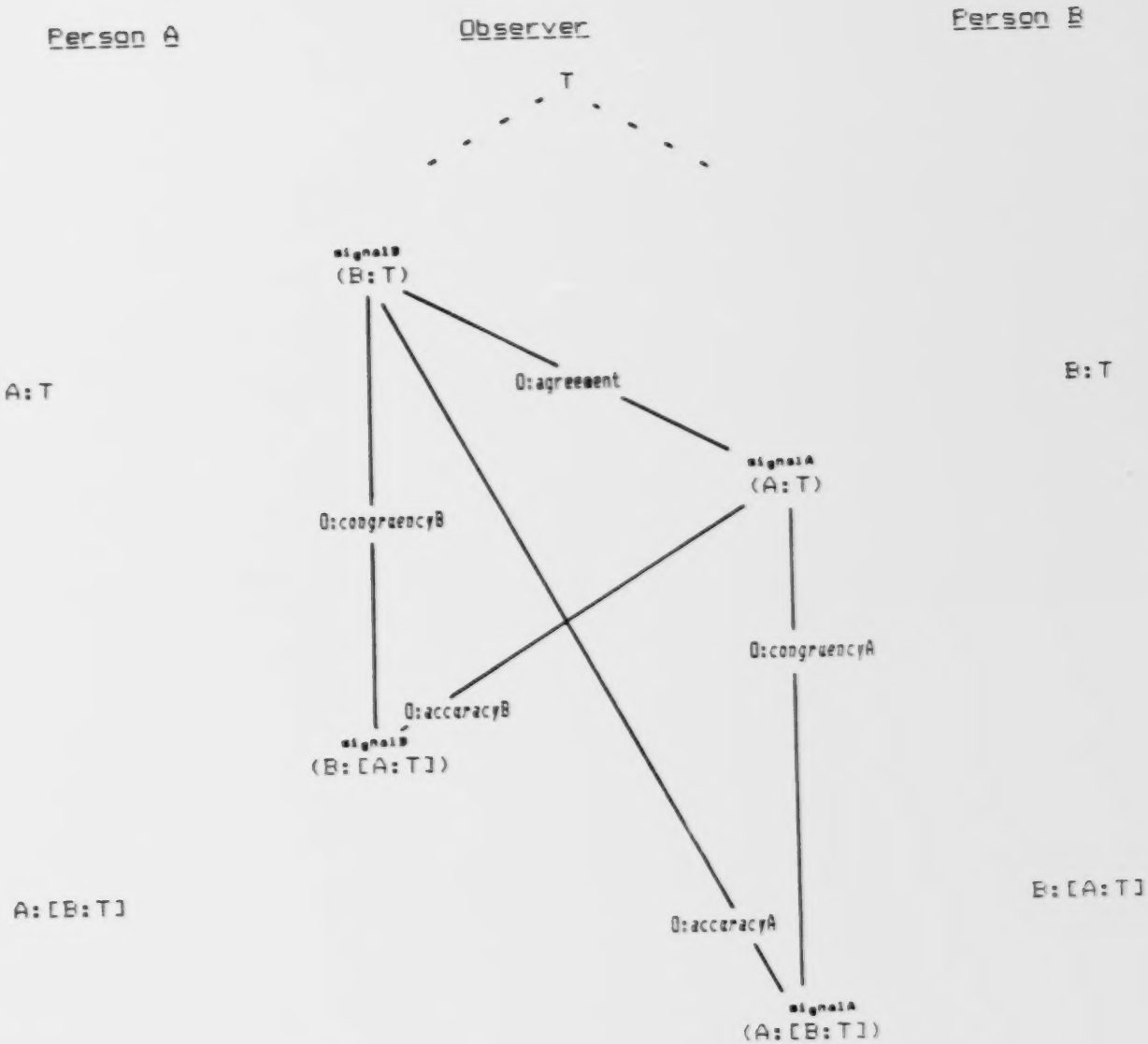

Figure 3

Coorientation: an Interpersonal Model

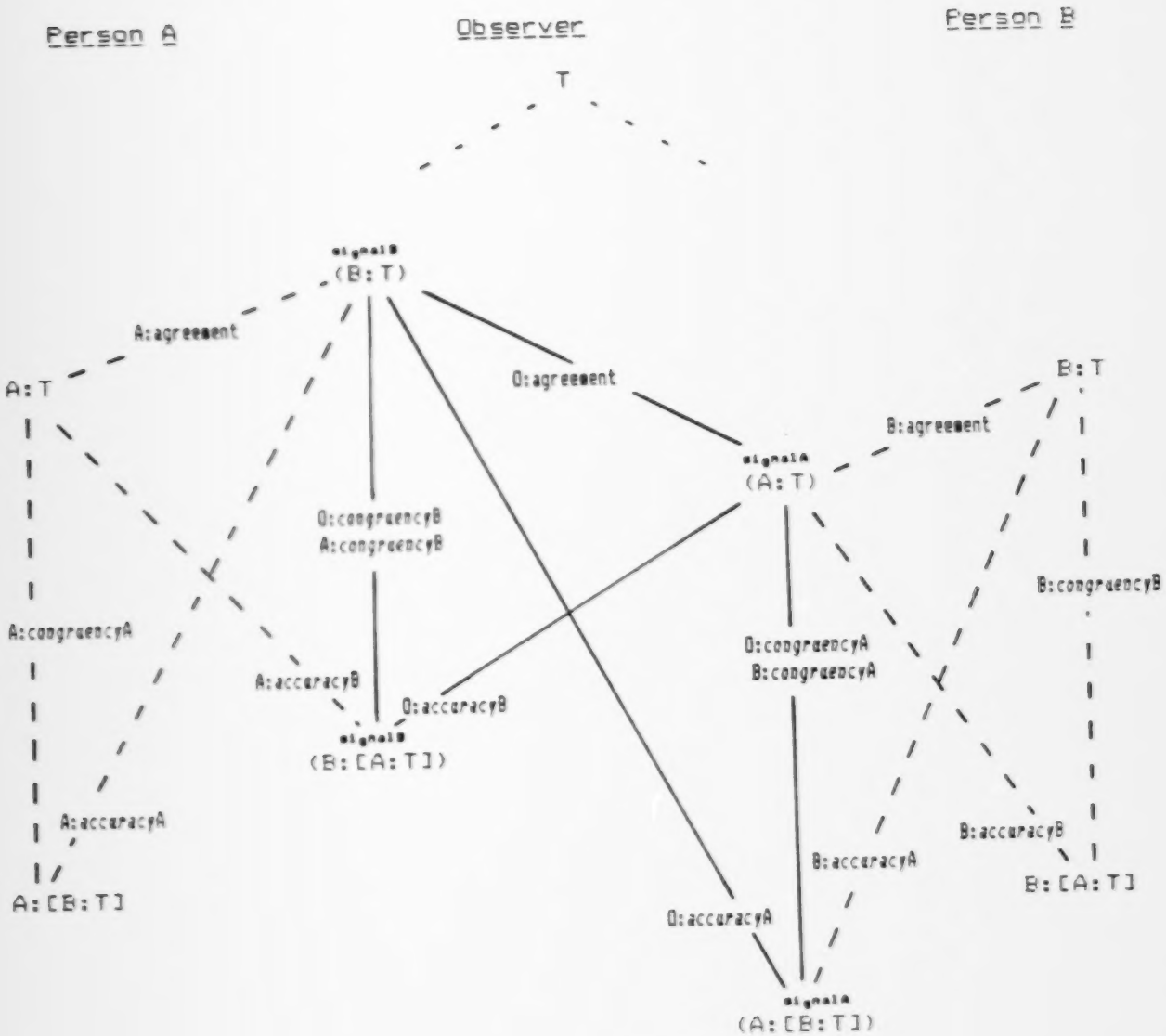

Figure 4

Coorientation Objectives

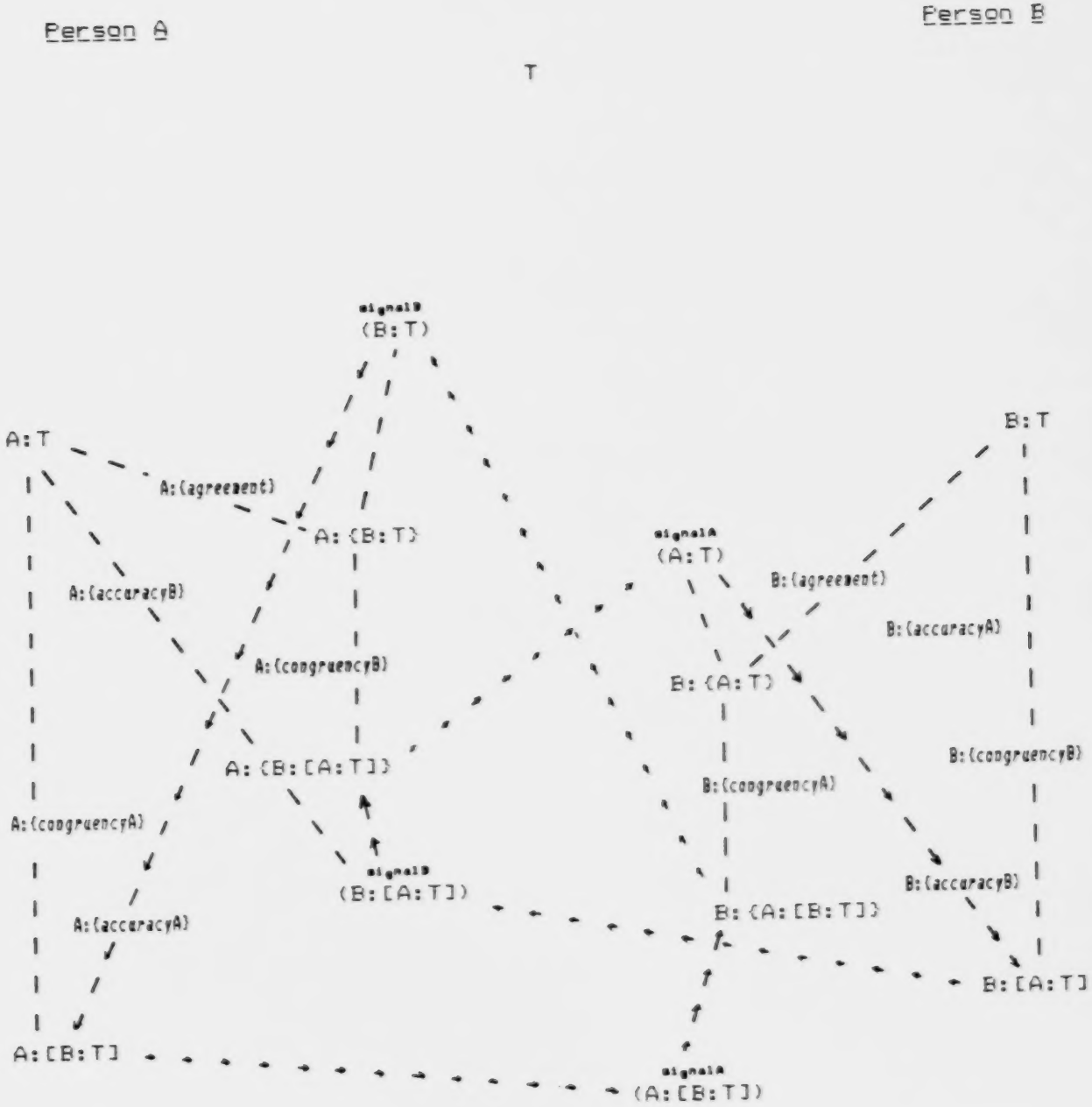

Figure 5

The Coorientation Model: Observed Relationships